

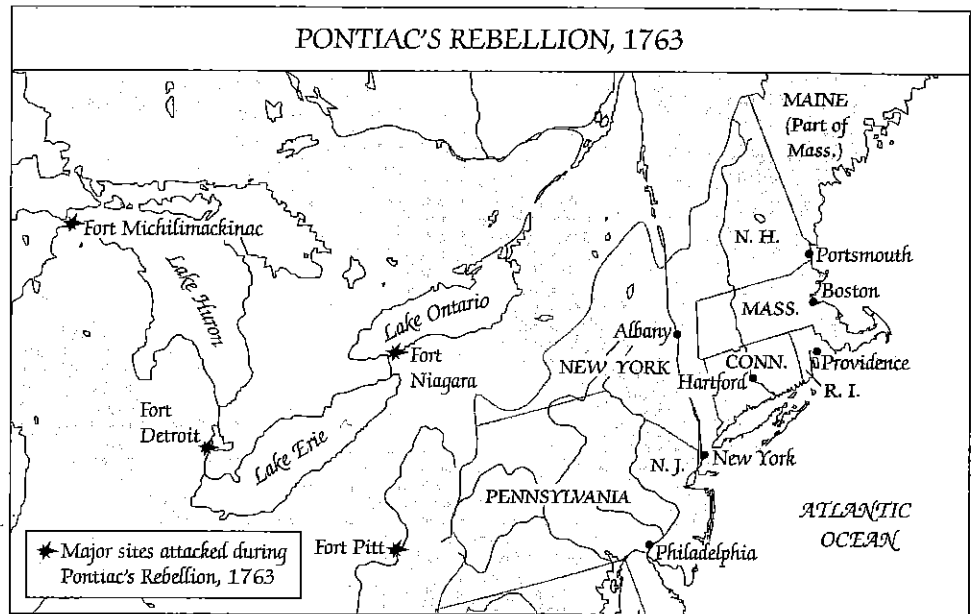
C. Pontiac's Rebellion and Its Aftermath

1. Sir William Johnson Describes the Indians' Grievances (1763)

Britain's triumph over France in 1763 proved a classic example of a Pyrrhic victory. It led first to renewed conflict with the Indians of the Great Lakes–Ohio Valley region and then to mounting problems with the seaboard colonists. Those problems eventually contributed heavily to the outbreak of the American Revolution. Almost immediately after peace was declared, the British announced that they would discontinue the French practice of supplying the Indians with arms and ammunition. Britain also made clear its intention to fortify the territory it had wrested from France. Peoples of the Five Nations, or Iroquois Confederacy, were especially embittered, as their wartime alliance with Britain had led them to expect better treatment. A coalition of Indian peoples led by the Ottawa chief, Pontiac, rose up against the British, first attacking the fort at Detroit and eventually storming all the British garrisons in the region, from Fort Pitt in the east to Michilimackinac in the west. The British dispatched Indian commissioner Sir William Johnson to placate their Indian foes. In the passage from one of his reports that follows, what does he identify as the Indians' chief complaints? Which does he deem justified?

... The French, in order to reconcile them [the Indians] to their encroachments, loaded them with favours, and employed the most intelligent Agents of good influence, as well as artful Jesuits among the several Western and other Nations, who, by degrees, prevailed on them to admit of Forts, under the Notion of Trading houses, in their Country; and knowing that these posts could never be maintained contrary to the inclinations of the Indians, they supplied them thereat with ammunition and other necessaries in abundance, as also called them to frequent congresses, and dismissed them with handsome presents, by which they enjoyed an extensive commerce, obtained the assistance of these Indians, and possessed their frontiers in safety; and as without these measures the Indians would never have suffered them in their Country, so they expect that whatever European power possesses the same, they shall in some measure reap the like advantages. Now, as these advantages ceased on the Posts being possessed by the English, and especially as it was not thought prudent to indulge them with ammunition, they immediately concluded that we had designs against their liberties, which opinion had been first instilled into them by the French, and since promoted by Traders of that nation and others who retired among them on the surrender of Canada, and are still there, as well as by Belts of Wampum and other exhortations, which I am confidently assured have been sent among them from the Illinois, Louisiana and even Canada for that purpose. The Shawanese and Delawares about the Ohio, who were never warmly attached to us since our neglects to defend them against the encroachments of the French, and refusing to erect a post at the Ohio, or assist them and the Six Nations

¹Sir W. Johnson to the Board of Trade, November 13, 1763, in Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1908), vol. 2, Appendix, pp. 210–213.



with men or ammunition, when they requested both of us, as well as irritated at the loss of several of their people killed upon the communication to Fort Pitt, in the years 1759 and 1761, were easily induced to join with the Western Nations, and the Senecas, dissatisfied at many of our posts, jealous of our designs, and displeased at our neglect and contempt of them, soon followed their example.

These are the causes the Indians themselves assign, and which certainly occasioned the rupture between us, the consequence of which, in my opinion, will be that the Indians (who do not regard the distance) will be supplied with necessaries by the Wabache and several Rivers, which empty into the Mississippi, which it is by no means in our power to prevent, and in return the French will draw the valuable furs down that river to the advantage of their Colony and the destruction of our Trade; this will always induce the French to foment differences between us and the Indians, and the prospects many of them entertain, that they may hereafter become possessed of Canada, will incline them still more to cultivate a good understanding with the Indians, which, if ever attempted by the French, would, I am very apprehensive, be attended with a general defection of them from our interest, unless we are at great pains and expense to regain their friendship, and thereby satisfy them that we have no designs to their prejudice.

The grand matter of concern to all the Six Nations (Mohawks excepted) is the occupying a chain of small Posts on the communication thro' their country to Lake Ontario, not to mention Fort Stanwix, exclusive of which there were erected in 1759 Fort Schuyler on the Mohawk River, and the Royal Blockhouse at the East end of Oneida Lake, in the Country of the Oneidas, Fort Brewerton and a Post at Oswego Falls in the Onondagas Country; in order to obtain permission for erecting these

posts, they were promised they should be demolished at the end of the war. General Shirley also made them a like promise for the posts he erected; and as about these posts are their fishing and hunting places, where they complain, that they are often obstructed by the troops and insulted, they request that they may not be kept up, the war with the French being now over.

In 1760, Sir Jeffrey Amherst sent a speech to the Indians in writing, which was to be communicated to the Nations about Fort Pitt, &c., by General Monkton, then commanding there, signifying his intentions to satisfy and content all Indians for the ground occupied by the posts, as also for any land about them, which might be found necessary for the use of the garrisons; but the same has not been performed, neither are the Indians in the several countries at all pleased at our occupying them, which they look upon as the first steps to enslave them and invade their properties.

And I beg leave to represent to your Lordships, that one very material advantage resulting from a continuance of good treatment and some favours to the Indians, will be the security and toleration thereby given to the Troops for cultivating lands about the garrisons, which the reduction of their Rations renders absolutely necessary. . . .

2. Pontiac Rallies His Warriors (1763)

His appeals for trade goods and firearms rebuffed by the British, in April 1763 Pontiac summoned a meeting of leaders from several Indian groups at a Pottawattamie village on the banks of the Ecorse River near Detroit. There he laid out his plan to throw the British out of the land. What role does he see for France, recently expelled from the continent by British arms? How realistic was his plan?

The day fixed upon having arrived, all the Ottawas, Pontiac at their head, and the bad band of the Hurons, Takee at their head, met at the Pottawattamie village, where the pre-meditated council was to be held. Care was taken to send all the women out of the village, that they might not discover what was decided upon. Pontiac then ordered sentinels to be placed around the village, to prevent any interruption to their council. These precautions taken, each seated himself in the circle, according to his rank, and Pontiac, as great chief of the league, thus addressed them:—

"It is important, my brothers, that we should exterminate from our land this nation, whose only object is our death. You must be all sensible, as well as myself, that we can no longer supply our wants in the way we were accustomed to do with our Fathers the French. They sell us their goods at double the price that the French made us pay, and yet their merchandise is good for nothing; for no sooner have we bought a blanket or other thing to cover us than it is necessary to procure others against the time of departing for our wintering ground. Neither will they let us have them on credit, as our brothers the French used to do. When I visit the English chief, and inform him of the death of any of our comrades, instead of lamenting, as our

²From "The Pontiac Manuscript," a diary thought to be of a French priest who may have been an eyewitness to the events he describes. In Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1908), vol. 2, Appendix, pp. 223-224.

brothers the French used to do, they make game of us. If I ask him for anything for our sick, he refuses, and tells us he does not want us, from which it is apparent he seeks our death. We must therefore, in return, destroy them without delay; there is nothing to prevent us: there are but few of them, and we shall easily overcome them,—why should we not attack them? Are we not men? Have I not shown you the belts I received from our Great Father the King of France? He tells us to strike—why should we not listen to his words? What do you fear? The time has arrived. Do you fear that our brothers the French, who are now among us, will hinder us? They are not acquainted with our designs, and if they did know them, could they prevent them? You know, as well as myself, that when the English came upon our lands, to drive from them our father Bellestre, they took from the French all the guns that they have, so that they have now no guns to defend themselves with. Therefore now is the time: let us strike. Should there be any French to take their part, let us strike them as we do the English. Remember what the Giver of Life desired our brother the Delaware to do: this regards us as much as it does them. I have sent belts and speeches to our friends the Chippeways of Saginaw, and our brothers the Ottawas of Michillimacinac, and to those of the Rivière à la Tranche, (Thames River,) inviting them to join us, and they will not delay. In the meantime, let us strike. There is no longer any time to lose; and when the English shall be defeated, we will stop the way, so that no more shall return upon our lands."

3. The Proclamation of 1763

Seeking to pacify the western frontier and lay a basis for permanently orderly relations with the Indians, the British government on October 7, 1763, issued the following proclamation. What rationale does the government offer for its action? What aspects of the proclamation might have proved most unacceptable to the American colonists?

Whereas we have taken into our royal consideration the extensive and valuable acquisitions in America secured to our Crown by the late definitive treaty of peace concluded at Paris the 10th day of February last; and being desirous that all our loving subjects, as well of our kingdom as of our colonies in America, may avail themselves, with all convenient speed, of the great benefits and advantages which must accrue therefrom to their commerce, manufactures, and navigation; we have thought fit, with the advice of our Privy Council, to issue this our Royal Proclamation, hereby to publish and declare to all our loving subjects that we have, with the advice of our said Privy Council, granted our letters patent under our Great Seal of Great Britain, to erect within the countries and islands ceded and confirmed to us by the said treaty, four distinct and separate governments, styled and called by the names of Quebec, East Florida, West Florida, and Grenada, and limited and bounded as follows, viz:

First, the government of Quebec, bounded on the Labrador coast by the river St. John, and from thence by a line drawn from the head of that river, through the lake

³Annual Register, 1763, pp. 208ff., in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents in American History*, 7th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), pp. 47-50.

St. John, to the South end of the lake Nipissim; from whence the said line, crossing the river St. Lawrence and the Lake Champlain in 45 degrees of North latitude, passes along the High Lands, which divide the rivers that empty themselves into the said river St. Lawrence, from those which fall into the sea; and also along the North coast of the Bayes des Chaleurs, and the coast of the Gulph of St. Lawrence to Cape Rosieres, and from thence crossing the mouth of the river St. Lawrence by the West end of the island of Anticosti, terminates at the aforesaid river St. John.

Secondly, The government of East Florida, bounded to the Westward by the Gulph of Mexico and the Apalachicola river; to the Northward, by the line drawn from that part of the said river where the Catahoochee and Flint rivers meet, to the source of St. Mary's river, and by the course of the said river to the Atlantic Ocean; and to the East and South by the Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulph of Florida, including all islands within six leagues of the sea coast.

Thirdly, The government of West Florida, bounded to the Southward by the Gulph of Mexico, including all islands within six leagues of the coast from the river Apalachicola to lake Pontchartrain; to the Westward by the said lake, the lake Maurepas, and the river Mississippi; to the Northward, by a line drawn due East from that part of the river Mississippi which lies in thirty-one degrees North latitude, to the river Apalachicola, or Catahoochee; and to the Eastward by the said river.

Fourthly, The government of Grenada, comprehending the island of that name, together with the Grenadines, and the islands of Dominico, St. Vincent, and Tobago.

And to the end that the open and free fishery of our subjects may be extended to, and carried on upon the coast of Labrador and the adjacent islands, we have thought fit . . . to put all that coast, from the river St. John's to Hudson's Streights, together with the islands of Anticosti and Madelane, and all other smaller islands lying upon the said coast, under the care and inspection of our governor of Newfoundland.

We have also . . . thought fit to annex the islands of St. John and Cape Breton, or Isle Royale, with the lesser islands adjacent thereto, to our government of Nova Scotia.

We have also . . . annexed to our province of Georgia, all the lands lying between the rivers Atamaha and St. Mary's.

And . . . we have . . . given express power and direction to our governors of our said colonies respectively, that so soon as the state and circumstances of the said colonies will admit thereof, they shall, with the advice and consent of the members of our council, summon and call general assemblies within the said governments respectively, in such manner and form as is used and directed in those colonies and provinces in America, which are under our immediate government; and we have also given power to the said governors, with the consent of our said councils, and the representatives of the people, so to be summoned as aforesaid, to make, constitute, and ordain laws, statutes, and ordinances for the public peace, welfare, and good government of our said colonies, and of the people and inhabitants thereof, as near as may be, agreeable to the laws of England, and under such regulations and restrictions as are used in other colonies; and in the mean time, and until such assemblies can be called as aforesaid, all persons inhabiting in, or resorting to, our said colonies, may confide in our royal protection for the enjoyment of the benefit of the laws of our realm of England: for which purpose we have given power under

our great seal to the governors of our said colonies respectively, to erect and constitute, with the advice of our said councils respectively, courts of judicature and public justice within our said colonies, for the hearing and determining all causes as well criminal as civil, according to law and equity, and as near as may be, agreeable to the laws of England, with liberty to all persons who may think themselves aggrieved by the sentence of such courts, in all civil cases, to appeal, under the usual limitations and restrictions, to us, in our privy council.

And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to our interest and the security of our colonies, that the several nations or tribes of Indians with whom we are connected, and who live under our protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the possession of such parts of our dominions and territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their hunting-grounds; we do therefore, with the advice of our Privy Council, declare it to be our royal will and pleasure, that no Governor or commander in chief, in any of our colonies of Quebec, East Florida, or West Florida, do presume, upon any pretence whatever, to grant warrants of survey, or pass any patents for lands beyond the bounds of their respective governments, as described in their commissions; as also that no Governor or commander in chief of our other colonies or plantations in America do presume for the present, and until our further pleasure be known, to grant warrants of survey or pass patents for any lands beyond the heads or sources of any of the rivers which fall into the Atlantic Ocean from the west or northwest; or upon any lands whatever, which, not having been ceded to or purchased by us, as aforesaid, are reserved to the said Indians, or any of them.

And we do further declare it to be our royal will and pleasure, for the present as aforesaid, to reserve under our sovereignty, protection, and dominion, for the use of the said Indians, all the land and territories not included within the limits of our said three new governments, or within the limits of the territory granted to the Hudson's Bay Company; as also all the land and territories lying to the westward of the sources of the rivers which fall into the sea from the west and northwest as aforesaid; and we do hereby strictly forbid, on pain of our displeasure, all our loving subjects from making any purchases or settlements whatever, or taking possession of any of the lands above reserved, without our special leave and license for that purpose first obtained.

And we do further strictly enjoin and require all persons whatever, who have either wilfully or inadvertently seated themselves upon any lands within the countries above described, or upon any other lands which, not having been ceded to or purchased by us, are still reserved to the said Indians as aforesaid, forthwith to remove themselves from such settlements.

And whereas great frauds and abuses have been committed in the purchasing lands of the Indians, to the great prejudice of our interests, and to the great dissatisfaction of the said Indians; in order, therefore, to prevent such irregularities for the future, and to the end that the Indians may be convinced of our justice and determined resolution to remove all reasonable cause of discontent, we do, with the advice of our Privy Council, strictly enjoin and require, that no private person do presume to make any purchase from the said Indians of any lands reserved to the said Indians within those parts of our colonies where we have thought proper to allow settlement; but that if at any time any of the said Indians should be inclined to

dispose of the said lands, the same shall be purchased only for us, in our name, at some public meeting or assembly of the said Indians, to be held for that purpose by the Governor or commander in chief of our colony respectively within which they shall lie: and in case they shall lie within the limits of any proprietary government, they shall be purchased only for the use and in the name of such proprietaries, conformable to such directions and instructions as we or they shall think proper to give for that purpose. And we do, by the advice of our Privy Council, declare and enjoin, that the trade with the said Indians shall be free and open to all our subjects whatever, provided that every person who may incline to trade with the said Indians do take out a license for carrying on such trade, from the Governor or commander in chief of any of our colonies respectively where such person shall reside, and also give security to observe such regulations as we shall at any time think fit, by ourselves or commissaries to be appointed for this purpose, to direct and appoint for the benefit of the said trade. And we do hereby authorize, enjoin, and require the Governors and commanders in chief of all our colonies respectively, as well those under our immediate government as those under the government and direction of proprietaries, to grant such licenses without fee or reward, taking especial care to insert therein a condition that such license shall be void, and the security forfeited, in case the person to whom the same is granted shall refuse or neglect to observe such regulations as we shall think proper to prescribe as aforesaid.

And we do further expressly enjoin and require all officers whatever, as well military as those employed in the management and direction of Indian affairs within the territories reserved as aforesaid, for the use of the said Indians, to seize and apprehend all persons whatever who, standing charged with treasons, misprisions of treason, murders, or other felonies or misdemeanors, shall fly from justice and take refuge in the said territory, and to send them under a proper guard to the colony where the crime was committed of which they shall stand accused, in order to take their trial for the same.

Given at our Court at St. James's, the 7th day of October 1763, in the third year of our reign.

4. *Johnson Sketches a Possible Peace (1764)*

Johnson eventually concluded a peace settlement with the Indians in 1766, ending Pontiac's Rebellion. Here, two years before the final settlement, he outlines the terms that he hopes to secure (he was largely successful). What are the key elements of his peace plan? How realistic was his expectation that the peace would hold?

Your Lordships will please to observe that for many months before the march of Colonel Bradstreet's army, several of the Western Nations had expressed a desire for peace, and had ceased to commit hostilities, that even Pontiac inclined that way, but did not choose to venture his person by coming into any of the posts. This was the state of affairs when I treated with the Indians at Niagara, in which number were fifteen hundred of the Western Nations, a number infinitely more considerable than

⁴Sir William Johnson to the Board of Trade, December 26, 1764, in Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1908), vol. 2, Appendix, pp. 268–270.